

it was that during the Spring of 1858 a group of cattlemen in Provo drove a herd of stock through the canyon and established some ranches at the south end of the valley. Those in the group included William Wall, George W. Dean, Aaron Daniels and a few others. With an eye toward keeping their cattle in the valley during the winter these men harvested a large crop of meadow hay.

During the Spring and Summer of 1858 a number of persons explored the area and decided it would be a satisfactory place to settle.

The first steps toward settlement came in July, 1858, when a party headed by J. W. Snow, county surveyor in Provo, went to the valley and laid out a section of ground just north of the present site of Heber City. Twenty-acre tracts were surveyed and each man in the party selected his farm.

Having decided to settle in the valley, the men turned their attention to the feasibility of constructing a road through Provo Canyon. As early as 1852, an explorer, William Gardner, had recommended that such a road be constructed. Then in 1855 the Territorial Legislature enacted a measure empowering Aaron Johnson, Thomas S. Williams, Evan M. Green and William Wall to construct a road from the mouth of Provo Canyon in Utah County to the Kamas prairie. From there it was to travel northeasterly on the most feasible route until it intercepted the main traveled road from the United States to Great Salt Lake, near Black Fork in Green River county.

Unfortunately, this road was never begun. Misunderstandings with federal officials resulted in the appointment of Alfred Cumming as the territorial governor in 1857. He was escorted into the Utah territory by federal troops commanded by Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston. The presence of federal troops gave the Mormon people more to think about than building the road.

By mid-1858, however, the troops were peacefully garrisoned at Camp Floyd near Utah Lake and the Mormon people had returned to normal living.

With cattle grazing on the Wasatch lands, and with ranch sites already surveyed, the need for a road again became an issue of primary importance. To win support for the project, a group of Provo men took the matter to President Brigham Young and explained both the hardships and the advantages of building such a road. The Church President favored the project and called a meeting in the bowery at Provo on June 6, 1858. He said at that time:

"A road up Provo Canyon is much needed, and we want ten or twenty companies of laborers to go on it forthwith in order to finish it in about fifteen days so that you can go into the valleys of the Weber where there is plenty of timber.

"I understand that a company has been chartered by the legislative assembly to make that road. If those men will come forward we will take the responsibility of making it. We shall need about 500 laborers."

1st Bridge near mouth of Provo Canyon

The Provo Canyon Company was formed the next evening, with President Young himself subscribing for 200 shares of stock. Feramorz Little was named superintendent of the project with W. G. Mills as clerk. A company of laborers was formed and work began on the road.

As the wagon ruts through the canyon were formed into a road, the laborers faced the necessity of building a bridge over the Provo River. It was decided to place the bridge near the mouth of the canyon, and engineering work was begun immediately by Henry Grow, who later won fame for his construction of the Salt Lake Tabernacle.

When the bridge was completed in October of 1858 the Deseret News said in its edition of Oct. 13, 1858, that the bridge was "substantially and neatly made and calculated to be of service for many years to the inhabitants of Utah County."

While the road saved many miles for transcontinental teamsters and travelers in and out of Utah County, its most important contribution came in opening up Wasatch County for permanent settlement.

1st Bridge built for entrance into Provo Canyon

Ref. HBUM pp 546

Find Pictos Bridges
of

✓ Fernandez Little
290

✓ Henry Grove 286

for Mouth of
Provo Canyon
Pioneer Bridge

✓ W G Mills - Not in
Not in LDS Biog. Enc PPMH
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